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## THE SUPPLY OF WHEAT

BY GEORGE W. NORRIS,

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We are not at all concerned with the food problems of the Central Empires, and we are not particularly concerned with the problem as it affects neutrals. We are, however, vitally concerned with the problem as it affects our Allies. Prior to the war, the average annual wheat production of Great Britain was 61,000,000 bushels and its consumption 282,000,000 bushels, so that it had to import annually about 221,000,000 bushels. France produced 324,000,000, consumed 379,000,000, and therefore had to import 55,000,000. Italy produced 191,000,000, consumed 249,000,000, and therefore had to import 58,000,000. The three countries together produced 576,000,000, consumed 910,000,000, and therefore had to import 334,000,000.

With the outbreak of war the production of these countries necessarily fell off, due partly to the fact that there was a shortage of farm labor resulting from the draft for war purposes, and partly also to the fact that a large part of the best wheat lands of France lie in the occupied or devastated regions in the northeast. As a result of these conditions, the 1914 production of wheat by our three Allies fell to 89 per cent of their normal. This percentage was reduced to 81 in 1915, to 77 in 1916, and to 60 in 1917. Translating these percentages into bushels means that in 1917 these three countries had a deficiency from the normal of 228,000,000 bushels. Adding this to their normal pre-war importation of 334,000,000 bushels, we get 562,000,000 bushels as their import requirements to meet normal consumption.

## WHEAT RESOURCES OF THE WORLD

Where were these 562,000,000 bushels to come from? The four great exporting countries of the world are Russia, the United States, Canada and Argentina. Internal conditions in Russia and transportation difficulties made it impossible to expect any help from that source. The normal exports from the United States before the war were about 116,000,000 bushels, from Canada 111,000,

000, and from Argentina 100,000,000—a total for the three of 327,000,000, or just about three-fifths of what was required. The great demand for tonnage made it almost impossible to draw to any great extent upon the Australian or Indian surplus, and undesirable to import from Argentina if the needs could be met elsewhere. The reduction in farm labor resulting from the heavy enlistment in Canada made any great increase in the Canadian supply unlikely.

Manifestly it was up to the United States to supply the largest possible measure of the deficiency. It was not reasonable to believe that our exportable surplus could be very greatly increased by economy in home consumption, because, wasteful as we have been in other things, we were not great wheat eaters. The consumption in this country is only about six bushels per capita per year, which is about the same as that of Great Britain and Spain, and less than Italy or France. Ordinary economy in home consumption could not add more than from fifty to one hundred million bushels to the exportable surplus. The circle therefore narrowed until there was only one possible outlet. There were no other countries that could be drawn upon and our home consumption could not be curtailed to an extent that would go very far toward meeting the export demands. The only remedy was increased production in the United States. Prior to our entrance into the war, the high price of wheat was a sufficient incentive for such increased production, while since our entrance into the war there has been the added and it is to be hoped even greater incentive of supplying our Allies with the staff of life.

What were our opportunities in this respect? In 1910 we had 45,681,000 acres in wheat and raised a crop of 635,000,000 bushels. In 1915 we had increased the acreage about one-third to 60,469,000 acres, and the crop nearly two-thirds to 1,026,000,000 bushels. It might have been supposed that we would make another increase in both acreage and production in 1916 and a still further increase in 1917. Instead of doing so, our acreage in 1916 fell to 52,785,000, and the crop to 640,000,000 bushels. In 1917 the acreage fell still further to 45,941,000, with a crop of 651,000,000 bushels. In other words, the 1917 acreage and crop was almost exactly equal to that of 1910, and represented only three-fourths of the 1915 acreage and less than 65 per cent of the 1915 production.

In the meantime, reserve stocks had been exhausted; our Allies in spite of the greatest economy in consumption had been reduced to

bread cards and rations; and the situation was so acute and so plain that he who ran might read. It called for extraordinary and heroic action. The Treasury Department was confronted last year with the problem of raising \$6,000,000,000. It was raised, but it was not raised by any ordinary or routine methods. It was only raised by making plain to the people of the country the vital necessity of raising it, and by enlisting the interest and the personal efforts of hundreds of thousands of the patriotic men and women who are today conducting the third liberty loan campaign. Unless that money had been raised in this country, neither we nor our Allies could have fought this war as we have, or indeed at all. Unless more wheat can be raised in this country, it is a very serious question whether our Allies can continue to wage war.

#### THE FARMER'S PROBLEMS

I have said that in 1915 there were nearly 15,000,000 more acres planted to wheat than in 1917, and that these 15,000,000 acres were land suited to the growing of wheat was proven by the fact that the production per acre that year was greater than in 1917. The American farmer cannot be expected to sow wheat or cotton or any other crop on land not adapted to its cultivation, but there are more than 60,000,000 acres of land in the United States adapted to the cultivation of wheat. What did the farmer need to induce him to put 70,000,000, or 80,000,000 acres into wheat? He needed first of all to have his attention focused upon the critical nature of the situation. He needed to have made plain to him that there was a distinct and positive call upon his patriotism. In the second place, it was necessary in some localities that he should be supplied with seed, for cash if he had the cash to pay, and on credit if he had not. It was a situation where either the government or local organizations or, if necessary, private individuals should take some risks in financing it. The risk of financing the farmer's requirements for seed on the security of a crop lien is very slight. In the third place, he needed every assurance that could be given him that the capital that he would need to make and harvest his crop should be available. Here again the help of local associations and groups of bankers might have been enlisted to a much greater extent than it was. In the fourth place, he needed an assurance that he would be able to get labor. Holding out to him the promise of a large price for his crop

could not take the place of these assurances, because it is of no use to offer a man a high price for his crop unless he can have a reasonable assurance that he will be able to produce the crop.

To what extent were these assurances given? In the President's message to farmers on January 31, he said: "The attention of the War Department has been very seriously centered upon the task of interfering with the labor of the farms as little as possible, and under the new draft regulations I believe that the farmers of the country will find that their supply of labor will be very much less seriously drawn upon than it was under the first and initial draft." This was a statement of the fact that the attention of the War Department was centered upon the task, and of a belief that the farmers were to find their supply of labor very much less seriously drawn upon than it was in the first draft, but admirable as that message was it could not afford the farmers the assurance needed. In the Department of Agriculture's appeal to farmers to increase wheat acreage, published on February 19th, it was stated that: "While the labor situation still presents difficulties. . . . the farmers succeeded in overcoming them last year, and with better organization, and especially with deferred classification of skilled farm labor, the difficulties again can be surmounted and production maintained and increased." This was encouraging, but was not yet definite. In another statement, it was said that the Departments of Agriculture and of Labor were "continuing to assist farmers in securing the labor needed in their operations," and were planning to assist in the transfer of labor from community to community and from state to state, but it was not until a few weeks ago that there came a definite announcement from the War Department that drafted men who were needed on farms would be given a furlough for that purpose, and that no additional men would be drafted before the end of the present harvest season.

Whether this last announcement has come in time remains to be seen. Winter wheat, which represents considerably more than half of our total production, was of course planted last fall, and fortunately it has come through the winter so well that the present forecast is for a crop of 560,000,000 bushels, which is about one-eighth above the 1910-14 average, although over 100,000,000 bushels below the forecast at the same period in 1914 and in 1915. An unusually large acreage is being sown to spring wheat, and the size of our ex-

portable surplus next fall is now dependent upon the kind of weather that we get this summer. It is not possible that we shall be able to export anything like the amount that we ought to export, and there can be no doubt that we should exert to the utmost the only power that we have—that of economizing in consumption. Unless we should be fortunate enough to get an unexpectedly large crop of spring wheat this summer, this economy must continue not only through this calendar year but at least until next summer. It is to be hoped that before the time for the sowing of winter wheat next fall there will be effected the same sort of organization for getting wheat that has been effected for getting dollars, because the one is just as vitally important as the other.

## THE LIVE-STOCK AND MEAT SITUATION

By L. D. H. WELD,

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In consideration of war-time food problems, there is perhaps no industry which is of more vital importance than the live-stock and meat industry. Meat furnishes an extremely important part of the soldier's ration and of the family diet in America, and the demands from the Allies have been increasing. Furthermore, there is no industry in the country which can point to such a proud record of achievement, in that the live-stock raisers and the packers have fulfilled all war-time demands, and have delivered promptly.

The accomplishments of this industry are all the more remarkable when one considers the situation immediately preceding the war. Live-stock production had not been keeping pace with population. There was, however, no need for it to do so, because until recent years we had always had much more meat than we needed, and we exported heavily to foreign countries. Since 1900, Argentina and Australia have been gradually taking our place in foreign markets because they could produce beef and mutton more cheaply than we could. As a result, our exports had dwindled to a very small amount before the war, and we were producing only enough to feed ourselves. With the outbreak of the European war, unusual demands were made on the United States for beef and